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Mrs. Young Oy Bo Lee

FROM CHINA TO AMERICA
CHINESE CULTURE AND HERITAGE
1928-1980

An Interview Conducted By
Kate Gong
[in Conjunction with
a Vista College Class Taught By
Elaine Dorfman]
1987

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

I knew many of my mother's life experiences and, from time to time, would share them with friends. They were always fascinated. They encouraged me to write my mother's experiences down. Their suggestion went unheeded. It was too much bother. It'll take too much time. I'll do it, someday.

Well, when my father died in 1976 he was eighty-six years old. He had come from China when he was only in his teens, as did his father before him. Father lived through the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906. He experienced the effects of the Chinese Exclusion Act. He served in the US Army during WW 1, stationed at the San Francisco Presidio. He lived through WW 2 and the Korean War. I still remember him singing at the dining table, in Chinese, after everyone had eaten and left. He said he was singing a Chinese folksong. I never took the time to ask him about any of these experiences. Now, he is gone. There is no story to tell, no history to recall and no culture to find.

There is a class called Sociology 031, Oral History Methods and Techniques. I'm not a prolific writer. I'm going to need help. I signed up for the class. I must write my mother's oral history before we lose it. So, she doesn't speak English. Take it down in Chinese and translate it. Read it back to her in Cantonese for accuracy. But, that's alot of work. Yes, but remember what happened when father died.

It has been nearly six months since the inception of this project Mother has worked hard gathering old photos and shaking old memories. She had to call her brother in New York City for names and dates. Some of the interview was difficult for her. It brought back many sensitive memories of hurts long passed. Some of it was happy, some sad. But she and I are elated that it is done. Working together has brought us closer together. There was so much I didn't know about her.

Now my children and their children will know about their grandmother. They will know about their heritage, the old culture, and something about their identity.

Thank you God, for helping me from beginning to end.

Kate Gong
Berkeley, California
May 1987

This is Kate Gong and I am interviewing my mother, Mrs. Young Oy Bo Lee, about her life between the years 1928 - 1980. This is the first of two interviews and will be taped in Cantonese, a dialect spoken in southern China. It is March 2, 1987 and we are in my home in Berkeley, California.

##

Family History

Kate: Mother, please tell me when and where you were born.

Mrs. Lee: I was born in 1918 in Gem Fon Village, near Taishan City in Kwangtung Province, southern China.

Kate: And how far is Gem Fon Village from the city of Canton?

Mrs. Lee: It use to take all day to travel from my village to Canton City. First we took a local bus from our village and drove north for five hours until we reached the Hsi Chiang River.

The windows on the bus were always opened and the dust flew everywhere. Sometimes people brought their chicken and livestock with them. The roads were unpaved and terribly bumpy because they were full of holes. On one occasion the bus had two flat tires and I thought we wouldn't get to Canton! (she chuckles) The ride was exhausting and my bottom was sore from bouncing up and down on the wooden seat.

When we arrived at the river, we took a two hour ferry ride across the river. On the other side we would board another bus that took us to Canton. The trip took all day.

I didn't visit Canton until I was eighteen years old.

Kate: I would like to ask you about Canton at a later time.

And your father was Ng See Shen, born approximately 1880 and your mother was Ng Mou Louie, born approximately 1882?

Mrs. Lee: (she glances at the biographic outline) Yes.

Kate: Can you tell me about your family while you were growing up in the village.

Mrs. Lee: I had three older brothers, Ng Chang Pom, Ng Shan Chai and Ng Di Sha, and two sisters, Ng Di Shim and Ng Shi Moy. And of course, my parents. I was the fifth of six children.

Big brother Chang Pom died when he was only a week old. I don't know what he died of. And big brother Shan Chai died when he was seventeen years old. He was working for another farmer not too far from where we lived. It was raining and my brother stayed out in the field to work. He got terribly sick and died. I think it was pneumonia. (she said sadly) I liked my older brother Shan Chai and felt his loss for a long time.

Health Care in the Village

Kate: What was medical care like in the 1930's?

Mrs. Lee: We always had good tropical weather and we didn't eat junk food. We paid attention to our diet, and had the use of acupuncture. There was little sickness in my family.

We took herb medicines made from berries, bark, leaves, fungus, roots and medicinal teas. The herb medicines looked black, tasted bitter (she winces her face) but we drank it quickly and immediately ate something sweet.

There was no money for doctors.

Kate: Mother, what about child birth?

Mrs. Lee: All the pregnant women worked until their babies were born. The mid-wives from the village delivered them. Some babies died during delivery and some mothers died from complications. The strong ones survived. Most families in the village were poor and could not afford doctors and hospitals. Life was hard in those days.

Education in the Village

Kate: What can you tell me about education in the village during the 1930's?

Mrs. Lee: Most of us were older when we began school. My brothers, sisters and I began when we were ten years old. There was no opportunity for an education when we were younger. The children from families who had money began school when they were four or five years old.

There were so many of us in the family and so little money. Back home the boys had more education and expected to go out to work. The girls were expected to get married, go to the man's family to bear children and take care of his family. The girls always prayed that they would get a good mother-in-law.

My sisters and I had about three years of school--between ten and thirteen years old. My brother had five years. After I got married, I was able to send money home so that my nieces and nephews could start school at age four and five.

Kate: Where did you find your teachers?

Mrs. Lee: In our village, we would combine money with the people from the nearby village and hire a teacher from the local area. Most villages did that. Then the boys and girls from several villages would come together for school. The larger villages would hire three or four teachers, the smaller ones would hire only one. Some rich families had tutors for their children, at home.

Kate: What did you learn in the three years that you went to school?

Mrs. Lee: I learned to read and write Chinese characters, learned basic arithmetic, and alot of Chinese history. I liked school.

My House in the Village

Kate: Tell me about the house you lived in.

Mrs. Lee: Our house was made of brick and did not have cement or steel reinforcement. It was a nice and comfortable house. The very poor families built their houses of dirt and mud blocks and when it rained, their houses would fall down. They would have to rebuild after the rain. (she shakes her head in empathy)

When you first entered our house, you would passed the area where the animals were sheltered. Then you entered the living room area, the dining room area, and the cooking area with a wok seated in a small wood burning stove. Off to the left was the only bedroom with a double and single bed. There was no toilet facilities, no running water and no electricity. The floor was dirt.

Kate: You actually had animals sheltered in the house? What kind of animals?

Mrs. Lee: Daughter, (she raises her voice) animals meant survival for us. The oxen worked hard in the fields plowing, the chickens provided eggs, the pigs provided meat and the goat provided milk. We took good care of them because we needed them.

Kate: Mother, you told me that snakes would hang down from the rafters in your house. Can you tell me about that?

Mrs. Lee: There were rice paddies surrounding our entire village. The paddies were irrigated with water for many months during the rice growing season. During those months in particular, water snakes would often find their way to the houses in the village, crawl up on the roofs (she lifts both arms up into the air) get into the houses through opened windows and we would find them hanging from the rafters. Most of them were harmless but my sisters and I loved to screamed. (she laughs loudly) It wasn't so funny when you found one in your bed though.

Girls Cottages in the Village

Kate: Can you tell me about the girls cottages?

Mrs. Lee: Our house was small as were most houses in the village. There wasn't enough space for all of us to sleep in one bedroom. So when my sisters and I became teenagers, we went to the girls cottages to sleep at night. In the morning we would return home. The cottages were nice.

Mrs. Lee: (she smiles broadly) There would be ten girls, all in their teens, sharing a cottage. We would sit on wooden slats that formed our bed, on top of bedcovers made of thin cotton. We would cut and eat fresh bamboo, play cards and talk until we fell asleep. It was fun. There were no adults around.

During Chinese New Years we would set off firecrackers outside the cottage door, play hide and seek and wouldn't have to go to the fields to work. But once it got dark we didn't have anymore light. The houses would have a kerosene lamp hanging inside the front door, but the cottages didn't. There wasn't much kerosene. We slept early and woke up before the rooster crowed.

Farming in Rural China during the 1930's

Kate: What kind of crops were planted by the farmers in your area?

Mrs. Lee (she laughs because I used the wrong Chinese word for "planted." She sounds out the correct word for me.)

The farmers planted rice and grew many kinds of vegetables. There was potato, bok choy, mustard greens, winter melon, bitter melon, chinese celery and we raised pigs and chickens too.

In the Spring, we went to the rice paddies and laboriously planted the rice seed. It was back breaking work to plant everything by hand. Father and my brother would also plow the adjoining field with the plow or hoe, to prepare the soil for the vegetables. The girls would weed, water and set down the vegetables.

We all worked from sunrise to about 5 or 6, before sunset.

Kate: And how did you get your meals while working in the fields?

Mrs. Lee: We had no watches so we figured the time by watching the sun cross in the sky. When the sun was almost overhead, mother would go home and prepare lunch, our first meal of the day. Only after harvest did we have three meals a day. Mother would return in about an hour and a half, with two baskets suspended from a long bamboo pole, across her shoulder. Inside the baskets were the rice bowls, chopsticks, and food. There was never any shade so we sat together with hats and scarves covering our heads. The terrace farm land was so beautifully green all around us. And it was peaceful.

Most often mother would have cooked rice, salted fish, some vegetables but rarely any meat. We didn't have alot of food, we wore no shoes, and never had new clothes. Our clothes always had patches. But despite our poverty, we were a happy family.

Kate: You mentioned earlier that times were better for the family after harvest. Can you tell me about that?

Mrs. Lee: During the summer months we continuously picked the vegetables.

Mrs. Lee: We sold some at the market, ate some and stored the remainder. But in the Fall, we harvested the rice. That was the most important time of the year.

By Fall, the rice stalks were very tall. The entire family would go to the field and pull the stalks out of the water and dump them in bamboo baskets. Once we got home, we removed the grains of rice from the stalk, but the grains still had husk on them. The green stalks were dried for the animals. After rinsing the dirt from the rice, we started to grind the husk off the grains of rice.

By hand, we would turn a grinding stone that would remove the husk. It was a tiresome job and it took forever to remove the husk from all the rice. Mother alway got her rice grains the whitest. Some rice grains would be milled furthered into flour.

My parents and brother would go to the village market with their large baskets and sell the rice. They would bring home fruits, nuts, poultry and other staples. I still remember waiting anxiously for them to come back from the market. They always had a surprise for us--usually a special fruit.

Politics and the Rural Family

Kate: Was your family aware of the politics in China during the 1930's?

Mrs. Lee: Daughter, (reacting indignant) it didn't matter who was running the country or what was happening up North in Peking or Shanghai. The people in the South were poor farmers trying to make a living off the land. The only things we wanted were better crops, favorable weather and better living conditions. The government provided none of that.

Also, communication was very scarce. News would often arrive many months after the event.

China is a large country and there has never been a single emperor or ruler that could oversee the entire country, at one time. This was particularly true in the countryside. Although we heard that there were foreigners, foreign soldiers and missionaries living in the cities, (I saw them in Canton)we were removed from the politics of the country.

Religion at Home

Kate: What religion was practiced in your home?

Mrs. Lee: Your grandparents believed in honoring their ancestors. They would burn incense and paper money, put food and drink out to remember the needs of the ancestors in the other world. Several times a year they would make journeys to the cemetary to tend to the burial plots;

Mrs. Lee: clean and sweep around the plots, weed and water the grass and bring fresh flowers. Honoring our ancestors is not a religion, but a very strong cultural practice.

Morals and Family Obligations

Kate: What did your parents teach you about morals and family responsibilities?

Mrs. Lee: We learned about such things by observing the behavior of our parents. They never sat us down and said that this or that was good morals. Instead, they showed great respect for their elders and took care of them in their later years, they spoke kindly of others and to others, they worked very hard and took good care of us.

When other families were in need, your grandparents would share what they had, even thought they had very little.

There was almost no thievery in the village. We left tools out in the field and there was never a problem. The farmers did not steal from each other.

When we misbehaved, we were disciplined with a rod of two bamboo reeds tied together. It hurt. We were told that we must live up to good standards. Misbehaving meant lowering our standards. As poor as we were, there was alot of pride.

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Marriage to Mong Wah Lee

Kate: Mother, you indicated that your marriage to father was arranged by by a matchmaker. How fascinating! Please tell me about it.

Mrs. Lee: Well, I was eighteen years old.

It was necessary for poor families like mine to find suitable husbands for their daughters, as soon as possible. As we grew older and bigger, we consumed more food.

Young people did not travel and had few opportunities to meet prospective mates, so matchmakers were used.

This one matchmaker, a woman from a nearby village came to see my parents. She told my parents that a successful Chinese man, who had gone to America, was looking for a wife; one that would stay in Canton City and take care of his property. This man was here for one year and was to return to America after that time. His plan was to return permanently to China, in the future. He would visit periodically until then.

Kate: What thoughts went through your mind when you met father?

Mrs. Lee: I met your father and he was handsome; even if he was twenty-five years older. I forgot what I said to him, I was so nervous. I had never met anyone who had gone to America before.

My mother said that if I married this man, life would be good for me. She pointed out that I would live in the big city and couldn't have to work in the fields anymore. He was willing to make a nice dowry (in this case it was from the man's family to the woman's family) Although he had a wife and seven children in America, I would be his wife here.

Kate: Seven children! What did you think about that and being a second wife?

Mrs. Lee: (pausing to think) At first I didn't know what to think. In Chinese society it was acceptable for a man to take more than one wife. It was a sign of success and prosperity. It was a practical matter to marry younger women. The men would have someone to care for them in their old age.

Kate: What made up your mind for you?

Mrs. Lee: I realized that it was an opportunity for a better life for me and my family. It wasn't an easy decision but I decided to marry your father.

Kate: Did you think you loved him?

Mrs. Lee: (pausing to think) It wasn't a matter of whether I loved him or not. That was besides the point. It would be a marriage built on mutual needs. Things were like that, then. (her voice drops)

Kate: Can you tell me about the marriage festivities.

Mrs. Lee: About a week before the ceremony, his family would bring dozens and dozens of moon cakes and food staples to my village for my family and relatives. There was also a roast pig. My family would have a party and invite everyone from the village. Then they returned a portion of the rice cakes along with a pair of man's trousers. The trousers meants that he will wear the pants in the family.

Grandmother would burn incense and pray for a good marriage. She chose an appropriate day to get marry according to a Chinese calendar. There would be a tea ceremony and then we were married. Oh yes, there was firecrackers too.

The Japanese Invades China

Kate: What was life like in Canton?

Mrs. Lee: It was a nice city. There were movie theatres and nightclubs. I never went, but I knew they existed. I had running water and

Mrs. Lee: electricity in our apartment building. There were beautiful tiles.

There were many ships docked in the harbor from around the world and many foreigners who came to do business. I remember their wives wore big dresses, big hats and carried pretty parasols. You know, those things that looked like umbrellas.

There were alot of beggers and poor people living in the streets.

Kate: Do you know what countries the foreigners were from?

Mrs. Lee: I think most of them were Portuguese, French, British and Americans. Maybe some Germans too.

Your brother Peter was born in Canton, in 1937. Father returned to America. Several of his children came to China to study. I believe they were Mabel, Chester and Francis. No, maybe Jane. It's been so long. They stayed with their grandparents.

Kate: In 1931 the Japanese seized Manchuria. By 1937 they had launched a major attack on China and was moving towards the South. Did you have any knowledge of this?

Mrs. Lee: By the end of 1937, the year your brother was born, we were receiving news in Canton that the Japanese armies controlled most of eastern China. They were moving south towards Canton. It was a very dangerous situation. There were news clippings of Chinese being killed as the Japanese captured cities, they were taking political prisoners and soldiers were raping girls and women.

News reached father in America and he decided that we had to leave. He began arrangements for our departure.

Departing for America

Kate: What arrangements were made?

Mrs. Lee: Father and his first wife came to Canton to take their children and also to take Peter back as their son, to the U.S. I was to enter the U.S. as the single daughter of the Young family. Now please don't go around telling everyone about this. You know how people like to talk.

Kate: And what was his first wife's name?

Mrs. Lee: I think it was Louie Hee Kay. You'll have to find that in the old papers.

It was approximately January or February of 1938 that I left Canton. It was the saddest and most miserable time of my life. My family came to the train station to say good-bye. We all cried. I didn't think I was ever going to see them again. I was frightened for them. I was only nineteen.

Kate: It must have been devastating to leave everyone you loved and familiar places you've known. (pause) And then you came to the U.S.?

Mrs. Lee: No, first I went to Hong Kong. I stayed there for six months waiting for my documents to be cleared by the British. Fortunately, your father had six younger brothers. Three of their wives were also in Hong Kong waiting for their clearance. We were all about the same age and became friends. They became life long friends.

Kate: Father's name was Lee Mong Wah and he was born in 1891, in the village of Hen High Fun, in southern China?

Mrs. Lee: (looks at the biographic outline) Yes.

Kate: What were the names of your three sister-in-laws?

Mrs. Lee: Chuen Sum, (wife of your father's youngest brother) Nuen Sum, (wife of the fifth brother) and Lok Sum (wife of the sixth brother.)

Arriving in America

Kate: When did you arrive in America and what took place?

Mrs. Lee: It took the boat three weeks to sail from Hong Kong to the U.S. It was August 1938 when we docked in San Pedro, California. I was not allowed to leave for San Francisco where my husband lived.

All immigrants were incarcerated in a building near San Pedro, until their entry documents could be verified. We were interrogated about who our parents were, where they were born, where we were born, etc.

Kate: How long were you detained?

Mrs. Lee: I was detained two weeks and I was scared the entire time. European immigrants were detained for one or two days but Chinese immigrants were detained longer. Some were detained for months.

Some Chinese were eventually denied entry and told they had to return to China. Many committed suicde rather than return home, with no hope for their family's future. They would hang themselves in the shower. I never went to the shower alone.

Kate: What were the facilities at San Pedro like?

Mrs. Lee: They were big barracks with bunk beds. There would be twenty-five of thirty-five women and children locked up in this large room. We were locked up like criminals behind bars! (becomes excited) I did not like my first impression of America.

Life in San Francisco Chinatown: 1938 - 1980

I. Chinatown

Kate: After you finally arrived in San Francisco, what did you find?

Mrs. Lee: I stayed in an apartment near your father's restaurant and take-out deli. Your brother Peter came to live with me again.

San Francisco's Chinatown was a nice community within a nice city. There were alot of hills and cable cars. There were Chinese restaurants, shops, banks, hospitals and just about any kind of shop you would want. Also, Cantonese was the main dialect spoken so it felt comfortable. There were modern conveniences in all the houses. All of these things made the adjustment to the new country, easier. Chinatown was a haven for the Chinese immigrant.

Kate: And how often did you see your husband?

Mrs. Lee: He would come and stay with us three or four nights a week.

II. Birth of Three Children

Kate: When were your three children born in America?

Mrs. Lee: You, your sister Emmie, and your brother Donald, were born in 1941, 42 and 43; at the Jun Wah Yee Yuen (Chinese Hospital); right in Chinatown. They even let our families bring in Chinese food. The entire hospital smelled of medicinal whiskey rice tea that my sister-in-laws brought. That was good for replenishing blood after childbirth.

Kate: And how about the pickled pigs feet with peanuts?

Mrs. Lee: Oh yes! (she cups her mouth as she laughs out loud) And they would bring that too. That was good for building up calcium after childbirth. Chinese medicine is good for you.

But you had to be careful. If you had too much of the rice whiskey tea, you would get dizzy.

Kate: You had three children within three and one-half years. How did you manage by yourself?

Mrs. Lee: It was hard but I managed. I was too busy taking care of four children to think about my situation. It was the best that it could be. Father provided well for us. My sister-in-laws were always coming around. They were having babies at the same time; all your cousins. Some of father's friends and relatives came by too.

I received a letter from China that the Japanese had invaded our village. My family was not harmed but they were prisoners until 1945. I cried.

III. Acceptance in the Chinese Community

Kate: Living in a close-knit community like San Francisco's Chinatown, how were you treated by people in the community, relatives and friends during the first ten years?

Mrs. Lee: (pause, quietly says) It was awkward sometimes. (pause) But it wasn't as unusual as you might think. Other Chinese families had the same situation. Your father was a good man and provided.

I could not go anywhere with your father; parties or such. Some people would whisper on the street and I would be embarrassed. (pause) I would see father's relatives on the street and they were cordial. They always asked about the children.

It was wartime too. The government sent people into Chinatown looking for Japanese. The American soldiers were taking them to camps. It was a bad time for all asians. There were hate posters all over town.

Kate: And how was it for your children?

Mrs. Lee: Oh, our apartment was near father's restaurant and take-out deli. You children would run down there and play everyday. The workers hovered over the four of you. Many of them had little children too. There was no stigma for you children. That was important.

IV. Becoming a Stepmother

Kate: In 1949, ten years after you arrived in San Francisco from China, what happened to drastically change your life?

Mrs. Lee: Your father's first wife, Louise Hee Kay died. I became a stepmother to her eight children. (she lifts up both hands and extends eight fingers) Eight children, she said again. It changed all our lives.

Kate: What kind of living arrangement did you have after that?

Mrs. Lee: Your father owned a set of flats with six units on Vallejo Street. Mabel, the oldest stepdaughter was married and lived with her husband Franklin, elsewhere. Chester, the oldest stepson was married to Rafealia and they occupied one of the back units. Francis, Jane (looks on her biographic sheet) Ellen, Margie, Mae and Hanson occupied two back units. Hanson was only ten years old then. The four of you children, your father and I lived in a front unit.

Kate: Who cooked for fourteen people every night?

Mrs. Lee: Oh boy, what a job. Each evening Rafealia and I would cook for one and a half hours. None of you could afford to be late for dinner or there wouldn't be anything left. And it was always noisy. Every single one of you liked to talk. It wasn't bad, but alot of work.

Many of the stepchildren were grown and it wasn't many years after

Mrs. Lee: that some of the stepchildren married and moved out.

V. Discipling the Children

Kate: How did you keep a balance between your natural and your stepchildren?

Mrs. Lee: Of course there was some resentment and animosity, as well as jealousy from the stepchildren in the beginning. It was most difficult for Hanson because he was only ten when his mother died.

Father and I decided that he would disciple the stepchildren. They had to ask for his permission, rather than mine. Most of them were in their teens or older and could take care of themselves rather well. They took good care of Hanson.

I disciplined my own four children.

Kate: What happened when conflicts would arise among the children?

Mrs. Lee: Occasionally there would be a problem between a stepchild and one of my own, or between the stepchildren themselves or the children and parent. I tried never to take sides. It was difficult, at first, but I really wanted to be fair to all the children. I refrained from critizing and tried never to add fuel to a bad situation.

When a stepchild wanted my advice, I would gladly give it. Otherwise, I never volunteered it. Sometimes I failed and someone would be angry with me.

But today, all of you are married and have your own families. Everyone keeps in touch and sometimes even call for advice. I guess your father and I didn't do such a bad job of raising twelve children.

VI. School, Work and Learning to Drive

Kate: During the 1950's you went to English Adult School to learn English?

Mrs. Lee: While you children were in school, I took the opportunity to learn English. All the Chinese women, particularly the young, single girls wanted to learn English. I took the #30 Stockton bus out to Filbert Street to Hancock Elementary School.

I met Mrs. Yuen, Lily Lee and Mrs. Lee at the school. We became life long friends. (she goes and gets her album) Here's a picture of my class of 1953. (points to a picture in the album) This is Helen, my teacher. Look at her big brimmed hat, scarve and long coat. (points to another photo) That was the style then. And I went there for two years and my English was good. I had very good penmanship.

Kate: Were all the China born women able to go to English school in the 1950's?

Mrs. Lee: The opportunity was there. But some did not want to, or couldn't afford the time because of children or work.

Kate: You mentioned that you worked to send extra money home to your family in China. What kind of work did you do?

Mrs. Lee: I sewed all the clothes for you four children while you were growing up. So it was natural for me to take in sewing from my friend, Mrs. Yuen. She owned a small garment factory in Chinatown and I worked piecemeal for her.

See, here are some pictures of you children wearing some of the clothes I made. (she points to several pictures in the album)

Kate: What were the sewing factories like?

Mrs. Lee: Mrs. Yuen's factory was the only one I worked in. There were rows of sewing machines and we used foot pedals. It was pretty easy to sew but in order to make much money you had to sew fast. There would be someone who cutted all the patterns and we just sewed all the seams together. There was no such thing as minimum wage.

Kate: And how many hours did the women work each day?

Mrs. Lee: It depends on how much you wanted to make. You worked as long or as short hours as you wanted. Most worked long hours. We brought our food from home in tin pails. Also, we brought our own tea thermos. Many women went home to eat and then come back. I often took work home and sewed after you children went to bed.

Kate: And you also worked in the family's take out deli?

Mrs. Lee: Yes I did. I prepared food for the deli after the chief, Qui Shu died. That must have been around 1960. The deli was on Washington Street.

I slaughtered live chickens, ducks and turtles that were delivered live to the store in crates. Do you remember taking the noisy animals out of the crates and putting them in the cages inside the store? (I nod yes) And remember sometimes how a chicken or duck would get loose and run down to Grant Avenue? (I nod yes again) You children would earn money after American school by plucking duck feathers.

Everything was fresh in those days. None of this frozen or precooked food. Especially in Chinatown, we bought groceries every day.

Kate: None of your women friends knew how to drive back in the 50's. What motivated you to learn?

Mrs. Lee: Your brother Peter asked us to buy a car during his senior year in high school. We bought a light-green color Mercury. I still

Mrs. Lee: remember that it had no power steering, so the car weighed a ton when you made right or left turns and when you had to park.

Your father and I would ask your brother Peter to come home after school, and take us to our appointments. Peter would always be one or two hours late. We would be furious. I decided then that I had better learn to drive.

Kate: Who taught you?

Mrs. Lee: I paid Mr. Yip, who taught me how to drive in his stick shift Chevrolet. I passed my driving test easily. It wasn't too difficult. But you did have to park between two poles and the car couldn't touch the poles. It was more difficult to pass the written test. I couldn't read English very well, so I borrowed every written exam I could find. I memorized all the answers and passed the written test with 98 points. There were 100 questions then. (she smiles broadly)

##

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This is the second interview with my mother, Mrs. Young Oy Bo Lee. It is being taped in Cantonese and will be transcribed into English. It is March 4, 1987 and we are in her home located in San Francisco, California.

Children and American Values: Lost of Traditions

Kate: Mother, you raised the children in San Francisco's Chinatown. How did you feel when the children began to assimilate American values?

Mrs. Lee: I'm glad you asked. That was the most difficult aspect of raising children in America. We were happy that all the children had a chance for a good education and the freedom to choose what they wanted to do in life. But, it was difficult to see you children moving towards a more independent lifestyle and losing Chinese values and traditions. People in America seemed to think more about leisure time activities. The elders were less revered. Marriages didn't last.

Kate: How did you feel about the children dating other ethnic groups?

Mrs. Lee: Your father and I were most concerned about this issue. We didn't want the children to lose their Chinese identity and heritage. We fought with you children long and hard on this issue. We worried about the breaking down of moral standards when you all started dating. Our relatives were worried about the same problem with their children.

But as it turned out, all of you married and have good families.

Mrs. Lee: Now we have Mexican, Irish, Italian and Japanese blood in the family. I don't worry about it anymore.

Involvement in Community Affairs

Kate: Father was very involved in Chinatown community affairs for years. Please describe the various activities.

Mrs. Lee: Your father was responsible for helping hundred of relatives and friends immigrate to the U.S. They would work for him awhile and then father helped them set up businesses. He made friends of politicans who helped enact better immigration laws for the Chinese.

He was elected president of the Lee's Association for four terms and it was a powerful position.

Kate: How was it powerful?

Mrs. Lee: The associations were business and family associations. They dealt with problems in the Chinese community; immigration issues, extortion problems, economic and family problems. There was a large networking system for the Chinese throughout the country. There was alot of responsibilities and power with the Associations.

Your father travelled to visit Lee Association sites all over the U.S. and Canada. I accompanied him on these trips.

Kate: Where were some of the places you visited?

Mrs. Lee: New York, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Baltimore, Texas and Seattle were some of the cities, and oh yes, Vancouver. We had relatives in Vancouver too.

It was a wonderful experience for me, someone from a small village in China. I had never travelled outside of San Francisco since arriving in 1938.

Kate: You mentioned that you and father were involved in other community activities. Can you tell me about that.

Mrs. Lee: We helped fundraise for the Chinese Hospital, two senior centers, and set up an improvised post office and informal meeting place at our take-out deli, for the men who lived in rented rooms in Chinatown. Each day the men would come by and check for mail from home. All of them were here in the U.S. alone. Their families were in China. The deli was a social place where they could visit with each other.

Chinatown, in those days, was a safe place. The police never patrolled our area, not even at night. It has changed.

Vacations in Russian River

Kate: You have some pictures here in your album, taken at Russian River. What can you tell me about them?

Mrs. Lee: It was unheard of to go on vacations when your father had his businesses. They were opened seven days a week. But, on two occasions he did take us to Russian River. Those were cherished trips.

Kate: How did you get to Russian River?

Mrs. Lee: Your father would pay a friend, Geun Sok, $50 to drive the six of us to Russian River. Mr. Sok would pick us up after one week. It was lovely. We didn't have to make reservations for the cabin--just drove right up and got the place. For lodging and three meals a day for six of us, for one week, it costed $150.00.

I still remember that they grew corn in the ground behind the cabins. We had fresh corn every evening for dinner.

We spent the entire day down at the river wading in the water. You children would hang on to your spare tires and float all day. And you would all get so tanned, so dar. Especially your sister Emmie. And yes, there was a large metal slide that would heat up so hot in the afternoon that you all complained.

Those were some of the happiest times together.

Racism in San Francisco

Kate: Mother, what kinds of problems did the family encounter when they wanted to rent or buy property back in the 1950's in San Francisco?

Mrs. Lee: The most obvious ones were that the whites would not rent or sell their homes to Chinese. The stepchildren felt it most because they tried to rent or buy in the 50's. The whites were very open about their feelings. When the Chinese tried to buy businesses outside of Chinatown, they were told, to their faces, that the business was not for sale to "Chinamen."

But the Chinese weren't the only ones that had problems. Every group of immigrants had problems. Today, racism is just more subtle.

Death of Mong Wah Lee

Kate: Father becomes ill and is hospitalized at Chinese Hospital in October of 1976. Can you tell me about it.

Mrs. Lee: Your father was in the hospital for over a month because of a leukemia condition that had worsened. He died on November 11, 1976.

Mrs. Lee: We had been married forty years. He was 86 years old. (her eyes water: we stopped for awhile)

When he died, I wanted to die. We had been through so much together in forty years. We raised twelve children, grew old together and we were confidants and companions to each other.

I felt angry. I felt abandoned. Who would be my confidant and companion now? I took me three years before I could even begin to accept his loss.

Your father had the biggest funeral I had ever seen in Chinatown. They closed off many of the streets so that his hearst could be driven by all of his businesses, his properties and home before driving out to the cemetary in Colma.

Representatives from many of the Lee Associations from throughout the U.S. came to his funeral. There were representatives from the Immigration Department too.

There were three bands as they matched through Chinatown with a large portrait of him.

Kate: Is that the portrait there on your wall? (pointing to it)

Mrs. Lee: Yes.

Sojourn to China: 1980

Kate: Mother, after Mao Tse Tung's death and President Nixon's visit to China in 1972, China reopened its doors to visitors. You decided to return home and visit your family in 1979. Please tell me about your experience.

Mrs. Lee: Daughter, it was a dream come true. When the communist took over the country, we thought we would never return. The communist closed off all visitors excepting the communist countries.

I will never forget the day I left for China. We were all at the San Francisco airport. I cried because I was waving to my American born family, whom I have cared for the past forty-four years. And, I was going to China to see the family that I left forty-four years ago. I was happy and sad at the same time. I had a hard time trying to contain myself.

If only your father had lived a few more years. He would have been able to visit China too.

Kate: And who was there to greet you when you arrived?

Mrs. Lee: My brother Ng Di Sha and my sister Shi Moy and her busband, two nieces and two nephews had come from the village to meet me at the Canton

Mrs. Lee: train station. They were so anxious that they came to the station three hours earlier. They said they checked every train as it arrived, just in case I got in early.

They called my name, "Oy Bo, Oy Bo" when I stepped off the train. We cried and cried. My brother and sister had gotten so old, and so dark from farming. They were so thin. They introduced me to their children. They were pretty and handsome.

We stayed in Canton that evening. We couldn't catch up on forty-four years in one evening. The next morning we left for the village.

Kate: What did you find when you arrived in the village?

Mrs. Lee: The entire village was there to greet me. I didn't recognize most of the people. I remembered my brother and sisters as teenagers--we were in our sixties now. They have had such a hard life, working the farm. It seemed as if a lifetime had passed.

My brother Di Sha and his family were living in the old house. My sisters married and were living with their families in the village. I was the only one who had the opportunity to leave the village.

My parents were gone now, having died in the 40's and 50's. I wanted to visit their graves, but when the communist took over, the cemetary was plowed over and used for farming. (her face saddened) The old graves were all gone.

Kate: What were some of the impressions that you had after forty-four years?

Mrs. Lee: Surprisingly many things had remained the same. The houses were older, and there had been minor improvements. But, basically they were all as I remembered them.

The terraced farm land was expanded further but still being farmed by hand. They have a few new tools but not any modern, electrical machines. The oxen still pulls the plow. The villagers told me that they have built a large dam up North and there would be no worry of drought.

There are still no toilet facilities in the house but there is electricity now. The people owned radios and black and white televisions. There are bikes in almost all the homes. There are paved roads outside of town and it took only three hours to reach the village from Canton, instead of all day. They have built bridges for the cars to cross the rivers, and the ferries were gone.

Kate: How about education and health care?

Mrs. Lee: Education is available for all children, beginning at age 4-5. Even village children can go to college if they pass the national exams.

Barefoot doctors come to the village every month to provide health care. Women can have babies in hospitals and get adequate prenatal care.

Mrs. Lee: They don't work until their babies are delivered anymore, and have maternity leave after the baby is born.

There is still not much food but everyone has something to eat.

Kate: And what about the birthrate?

Mrs. Lee: Each family is encouraged to have only two children. After that, the family is penalized. They will get no food coupons for the additional child. The government makes it more difficult to raise additional children. They encourage birth control.

Kate: How did your family feel about the communist government?

Mrs. Lee: There have been good things accomplished since the communist took over. Some I have already mentioned. I saw no beggers or girls selling themselves while visiting in Canton. But, the bad thing was that the state controlled all the property and restricted where and what you can do with your life. All of father's property had been confiscated.

There is little motivation or incentive to work hard. It is most noticeable among the young people. They see little justification for working hard, the state takes everything. The quota for rice each year means they have to work hard; and without individual reward,

Kate: What, if any, customs or traditions have they abolished?

Mrs. Lee: You can still practice your religion, but only in the privacy of your home. You cannot gather together in a group to worship. And, you had to profess that the state was more important and came before your religion.

Children who did well in school were taken away to attend schools in other regions. Those children had little family ties after awhile.

Kate: Your family saw you as the one who went to America and had all the opportunities. How did this affect your relations with them?

Mrs. Lee: It created some problems. They did not realize that your father and I had to work hard in order to send the money home to support them. They heard about the gold strikes in California and thought there was gold laying all over the San Francisco hills. They thought we had maids and servants to do our work for us.

While I was visiting, they asked me to buy them radios, bikes and televisions. And, they wanted the American or Japanese brands. Somehow the Chinese brands didn't last as long.

Kate: How did you feel about that?

Mrs. Lee: I couldn't make up for all the materialistic things that they lacked so I bought them what I felt they really needed.

##

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Matchmaking for the Family

Kate: When you met your nieces in China, you realized that they were of age to marry. You came back to the U.S. and took on the role of matchmaker. What did you have to do?

Mrs. Lee: Oh yes! (boastingly) After I returned from my trip to China, I acted as matchmaker for two of my nieces from the village.

A number of families who had immigrated to the U.S. had sons who wanted to marry. They were looking for brides and were going to the villages in China, to find them.

Kate: And, what did you do then?

Mrs. Lee: I made inquiries about the family background of these young men, their occupations, ages and asked for photos. If they were acceptable, I wrote to my family in China and told them. It was arranged that the young men would be introduced to my nieces. There was the possibility of marriage. Over a period of time, several marriages were consummated.

Kate: Where are your nieces today and what are their names?

Mrs. Lee: One niece is living in Baltimore, Maryland, that's Pai Pen, The other is in New York City with her husband and young children, That's Shi Pen.

The niece in New York City, Shi Pen became the sponsor for her parents and the rest of her family. That's Di Sha, my oldest brother who is 76 years old. They are all now living in America. They will have a much better life here in America.

Advice to the Younger Generation

Kate: Mother, you are sixty-nine years old and still active in the Lee's ASsociation Women's Auxiliary. You do Tai Chi, a form of health exercises each day. You still drive your car and we can never find you home. You are incredibly active.

You have raised twelve children. There are now thirty-six grandchildren and sixteen great grandchildren. What would you like to share with them about handling life's situations?

Mrs. Lee: That's a hard question to answer. Everyone has a different point of view. (pauses)

Well, some things that have helped me in coping with life over the years are determination, perserverance, patience and hard work. It helps to be honest and sincere in working problems out with people, and being sensitive to the needs of others. You don't have to be right, all the time.

If you keep your moral standards and integrity high, you will have confidence and people will respect you.

I'm afraid the younger generation won't understand this--but holding on to traditions and customs is holding on to part of one's identity. I hope that more of our young people will try to hold on to their Chinese identity and heritage.

Kate: Mother, thank you for your interviews. Thank you for your memories.

APPENDIX A

The Ellis Island of the West and the Unfair Treatment of the Chinese Immigrant

Angel Island, a state park out in the San Francisco Bay, not far from Alcatraz Island, is used for bicycle riding, picnicing, and is an overall popular weekend spot for local residences. But, in the past, it has served as a tribal ground for the Miwok Indians, a Nike missile launching base, and lastly, an immigration detention headquarters. The fact that it had been used as a detention headquarters has been lost in the shuffle of the many stages of change that it has gone through.

Over a period of thirty years, between 1910 and 1940, approximately 175,000 Chinese immigrants were incarcerated on Angel Island. Little information is available in California history books, recording the horrendous and degrading practices that were inflicted on the incoming Chinese immigrants. Because of the humiliation and outrage of this discriminating act on the immigrants, they have been reluctant to speak about their experiences.

Economic hardships and political changes in China caused large numbers of Chinese to immigrate to America. They left their homeland in search of a better life and survival. As soon as they set foot in America, discrimination set in. The Chinese went to the gold mines to look for their fortune. They took low-paying menial jobs disdained by the whites. They worked in the fields, and began to do work that they were familiar with, like catching shrimp and fish in the Bay and all along the Western coast. The immigrants were willing to work long hours and work hard. Jobs were scarce, and the whites viewed the industrious Chinese with their strange language to be a threat. Even though many jobs taken by the Chinese immigrants were jobs that the whites didn't want, the whites still felt hatred because they Chinese were willing to do the menial work. The labor unions were the real culprits and the catalysts for the racial hatred.

The Chinese were attacked physically in mining camps and fishing towns, many were stoned to death, lynched, or murdered. They were teased and verbally abused by thugs and union members. It was not unusual to have whites drive the Chinese out of rural towns, attack or kill them, and then steal their possessions. Not satisfied with inflicting physical and verbal afflictions on the Chinese immigrants, Europeans who came to California began to take over the fishing, agriculture, and mining trades. They got legislature in Washington D.C. to pass the Chinse Exclusion Act in 1882. This was the worst of a series of anti-Chinese laws.

The enforcement of the Chinese Exclusion Act changed America's immigration pattern. For the first time in American history, members of a specific ethnic group were denied entry to the naturalization process. Only government officials, merchants, students, teachers, visitors, and those who claimed to have U.S. citizenship were admitted into the country.

Until 1910, Chinese ship passengers who arrived in the San Francisco Bay were detained in a two-story shed at the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. There they would wait until immigration inspectors could examine them and determine the validity of their claims. There were up to 500 people detained in the

facility at a time. The Chinese community leaders in Chinatown complained to the U.S. officials frequently, because they were shocked at the unsafe and unsanitary conditions. When their claims were investigated, the Immigration Department indeed found support for the complaints and solicited funds to erect an immigration station on Angel Island.

Angel Island was officially opened on January 21, 1910. Immigration officers would ride a steamer over to the island and inspect the passengers' documents. Those with satisfactory papers could go ashore, while the rest would be detained. Many Chinese were incarcerated for weeks, months, and some, even years. Some were ordered to return to China and would commit suicide rather than return to face their families. Many families had sold all their possessions in China for the ship passage. Others borrowed the money and were to repay the loan; if they returned to China, they would have no way to repay the loan and would be disgraced.

While the immigrants were interned on Angel Island, any child over the age of twelve was separated from his or her mother and was not allowed to see or communicate with any member of his family. Most of the Chinese immigrants were males in their teens or early twenties.

Soon after an immigrant arrived at Angel Island, he would be taken to the island's hospital for medical examiniations. Some of the Chinese were infected with parastic diseases, because health conditions were poor in rural China. The U.S. government sought to use some of these diseases as grounds to deny their admission. Again, protest from Chinatown leaders revised this act, and some patients were allowed to stay for medical treatment.

Those who passed the medical examinations were placed in dormitories, which were communal rooms with rows of single bunk beds. There was no privacy. Men were kept on the second floor of the detention barracks, which were surrounded by a fence to prevent escapes. Women were housed in the same type of facilities in the administration building. Guards sat outside of the dormitories at night. The Chinese immigrants were locked up like criminals.

The detainees' major complaint, especially during the early years, was the quality of food. The concession for providing meals were awarded to private firms based on competitive bids. The quality of food was distasteful. Impatient and angry young male immigrants, at times, staged disturbances in the dining room, protesting unpalatable food. In 1919, a full-fledged riot broke out and federal troops were called to restore order. A year later, authorities in Washington D.C. finally decided to improve the situation and better food was served.

Regardless of the validity of the Chinese arrivals' claim for entry, he or she prepared for extensive interrogation by memorizing coached information. This information was provided months before they left China. Facts pertaining to family, home life, and native village were studied in minute detail from coaching books which might run several dozen pages long. This was particularly true in cases where the applicant and his witnesses claimed fictionous relationships.

Over the years, the Chinese persistently complained they were questioned on minute details which had no apparent relevance to the objectives of the board.

Some questions would be difficult for anyone to answer:

Who lived in the third house on your street, in your village?
Of what material was your floor of your bedroom?
Where was the rice bin located?

Discouraged applicants vented their frustrations and anguish by writing or carving Chinese poems on the detention center's walls, as they waited for results of appeals or orders of their deportation. They feelings of anger, despair, homesickness, and loneliness filled the walls of the detention barrack. Some samples of the poems carved into the walls go as such:

"As a traveller in wind and dust,
half the time it was difficult.
In one month, I crossed to the end of the ocean.
I told myself that going by this way would be easy.
Who was to know that I would be imprisoned at Devil's Pass"

Island, page 152

"Each day my sorrow increases as I stay on Island.

My face, as well, grows shallow and my body thin.
My detention and mistreatment has not yet ended.
I am afraid my petition will be denied and I, sent back."

Island, page 153

The irony of the exclusion was that it did not improve the situation of the white, working man. Unemployment remained high, and the wage level did not rise after the "cheap" competition from the Chinese had been virtually eliminated.

As for the Chinese, their experience on Angel Island and prisoners under the Exclusion Act laid the groundwork for the attitudes of an entire generation of Chinese Americans. They were forever alienated and uninvolved in the larger society. But, fortunately, out of the ruins of Angel Island came a race with internal pride and the will to endure hardships and rascims. Dreams of retiring one day to China with small fortunes helped them endure their treatment as an inferior, undesirable race. Many, however, never realized their dreams and lived out their lives as lonely bachelors, separated from their wives and families in China.

Written by:
Monique K. Gong
16 year old granddaughter of
Mrs. Young Oy Bo Lee
June 1987
Berkeley, California

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APPENDIX B

ROUTE FROM TAISHAN PROVINCE TO CANTON CITY 1930'S / APPENDIX B

APPENDIX C

YOUNG OY BO LEE'S MOTHER
Ng Mou Louie
1950 in Taishan City

YOUNG OY BO LEE'S PARENTS
Ng Mou Louie - Ng See Shen
1940 Taishan City

YOUNG OY BO
1937
Taishan City

YOUNG OY BO LEE with sister-in-laws
Lok Sum Nuen Sum
HONG KONG 1938

We were all about the same age and became friends.
They became life long friends.

YOUNG OY BO LEE AND SISTER-IN-LAW CHEUN SUM
San Francisco, CA 1940

We were about the same age and became friends....

And I sewed all your clothes when you were young....

Emmie Young Oy Bo Lee Peter
Donald Katy

San Francisco, CA
1945

Katy Peter Emmie
Donald

San Francisco, CA
1946

And mother made these too!
Emmie Katy
San Francisco, Ca.
1952

Katy Young Oy Bo Lee
Donald and Emmie

Berkeley, CA 1953

Then I went to Hancock School to learn English....

I met...
Mrs. Yuen
Lily

Our graduation picture
1953
Hancock School
San Francisco, Calif

Young Oy Bo Lee Mrs. Yuen
Teacher: Helen
1953

RUSSIAN RIVER 1953

Mong Wah Lee with children
Emmie Donald Katy

12

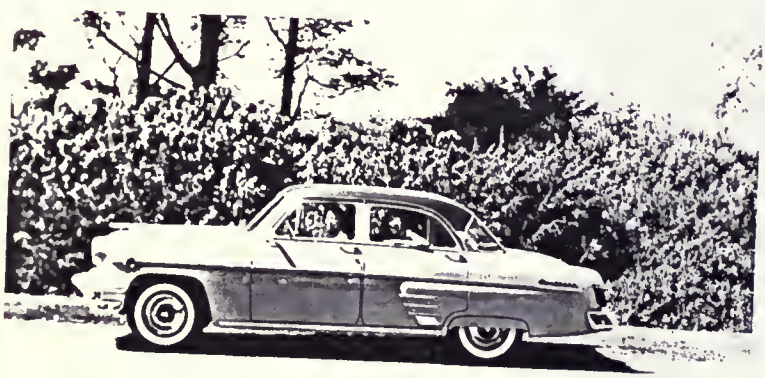
The Lee and Lim Family

Mong Wah Lee and Donald foating in their spares

Mong Wah & Young Oy Bo Lee

Young Oy Bo Lee

MR. YIP TAUGHT ME HOW TO DRIVE IN HIS STICK SHIFT CHEVROLET...
SAN FRANCISCO
1955



WE BOUGHT A LIGHT-GREEN MERCURY. IT HAD
NO POWER STEERING
SAN FRANCISCO
1955

YOUNG OY BO LEE'S OLDER BROTHER
NG DI SHA AND HIS FAMILY
TAISHAN CITY 1960

YOUNG OY BO LEE'S YOUNGER
SISTER NG SHI MOY & FAMILY
TAISHAN CITY 1960

I prepared food for the take-out deli on Washington Street

Mrs. Lee prepares the chickens and ducks for the oven...

1964
San Francisco

This is part of the kitchen at the Wah Sun Deli...

1964
San Francisco

MAY 1964

After the duck is roasted, it is taken out of the oven...

Mrs. Lee
1964
San Francisco

Then you chop the duck and sell it...

Mrs. Lee
1964
San Francisco

YOUNG OY BO LEE AND MONG WAH LEE
25th ANNIVERSARY 1963
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

YOUNG OY BO LEE'S FAMILY
1971
San Francisco, Calif

Mong Wah Lee's 80th birthday

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Kate Long

Tool #1

Three Tools - Term Project

Why are you interviewing this person?

My mother. I want to gather information about her life in China (as a child and growing up), about her marriage [arranged], when and why she came to America, and what her life was like as a second wife and subsequent step-mother to eight children. 1928-1980.

What is the purpose and goal

To record this information for the 12 children / stepchildren and 26 grandchildren for posterity; to enhance the children / grandchildren's knowledge of their maternal background (reflecting her strengths, ~~persuasion~~ perseverance, moral fiber, etc.). I want to get this into an organized, written report, available to the family.

What will you use this interview for?

Family archives.

Tool #2

YOUNG OY BO LEE HISTORICAL TIMELINE

National Party established in China	1918	Family and ancestry
China united under one govt	1923	Childhood
Depressions in USA	1924	Working in the fields
Japanese seized Manchuria	1928	School
Japanese invades inland China	1935	Marriage
	1938	Immigrate to America
WWII	1941	Raising 10 children
Communist rule begins in China, China closed to Western influence	1943	Work as seatress Go to English school Keep in touch with family in China by letter Raising 12 children
bobby sox, tailored suits		
MacCathy hearings	1954	Learn to drive
Korean War Color TV	1956	Community Involvement Travelling across country
	1959	Open business as food preparer Becomes grandmother
Presidental election		
	1965	Last child marriages
Moon landing by astronauts	1976	Husband of 40 years dies
Vietnam War		
Mao Zedong & Zhou Enlai dies in China, China reopen to Western world	1979	Returns to China for visit after 41 years
		life to present

Katie Long

Tool #3

YOUNG OY BO LEE OUTLINE

I. Family
   1. Effect of economics on size of family
   2. Pride in family, particularly ancestral
   3. Women's role in the family
   4. Role of children caring for parents
   5. Role of grandparents caring for grandchildren

II. Housing
   1. Sharing of home with extended family
   2. Economic factors determine that several generations live under one roof
   3. Description of dwelling
      a. furnishings
      b. rooms
      c. bed and bathroom facilities
      d. division of space between families and generation of families
      e. need to share dwelling with animals
      f. lack of space requires boy and girl cottages

III. Typical Day In The Village
   1. Number of meals per day
   2. Hours spent working in the field
   3. Chores assigned to members of the family
   4. Equipment used for plowing, irrigating and planting food
   5. Variety of crops grown
   6. Free time activities

IV. Education
   1. Number of years of school education
   2. Educational opportunities for girls
   3. Attitude towards education
   4. Curriculum in the school

V. Income
   1. What income from farming provides
   2. Effect on educational opportunities
   3. Immigrating to American to obtain necessary income for survival

VI. Marriage
   1. Role of parents in determining choice of mate
   2. Role of match maker in choice of mate
   3. Dating
   4. Marriages pre-Mao and post-Mao in China
   5. Divorces
   6. Age difference of 25 years in a marriage

VII. Religion and Morals
   1. Ancestral worship as a moral obligation
   2. Effect of parental teaching on morals

VIII. Medical Needs
   1. Maternal care and child birth
   2. Use of herbal medicine
   3. Diet and its effect on general health

IX. Immigrating to America
   1. Reasons for leaving China
   2. Expectations of life in America
   3. Boat voyage across the ocean
   4. Incarceration at Angel Island

X. Life in America (1938 - 1943)
   1. Adapting to a new language and culture
   2. Coping with difference in morals and lifestyles
   3. Coping with loneliness
   4. Chinatown as a haven
   5. Financial help from America provides opportunities for family in China

XI. Life in America (1943 - present)
   1. Raising children
      a. Role as mother and stepmother to 12 children
      b. Dealing with conflicts between natural and stepchildren
      c. Cultural upbringing and its effect on raising children
   2. Role as a second wife
      a. Attitude in Chinese society towards a second wife
      b. Philosophy of interpersonal relations and its effect in dealing with difficult problems
   3. Learning English
   4. Learning to drive a car

XII. Community Life
   1. Husband as a role model for community leadership
   2. Community involvement provides status, influence and power
   3. Providing children with leadership roles
   4. Travelling becomes part of community involvement

XIII. Occupations
   1. Farmer
   2. Seamstress
   3. Food preparer
   4. Mother
   5. Landlord
   6. Entrepreneur

XIV. Sojourn to China (1979)
   1. Emotional anticipation before taking trip
   2. Life for the family during the past forty one years (food, politics, health, education and marriage)
   3. Changes you noticed in particular around the village
   4. Life for the family today in China
   5. The family's impression of pre-Mao and post-Mao as it effected their family life
   6. Family's recollection of Japanese invading village in 1940.

Kate Jong

Information gathered by: Kate Gong

Date: 2/28/87

Interviewer's phone: (415) 548-1133

GENEALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SHEET

Name of Intervieww: Mrs. Young Oy Bo Lee

Date of birth: 9/1/1918 Place of birth: Gem Fon Village
Taishan Province-southern China

Home address: 964 Washington Street
San Francisco, California 94708

Date of Marriage: 1936 Place of Marriage: Gem Fon Village, China

Name of Spouse: Mong Wah Lee Place of birth: Hen High Fun Village, China 1891

Name of Father: See Shen Ng Place of birth: Gem Fon Village, China 1880
Taishan Province-southern China

Name of mother: Mou Louie Place of birth: Gon Ho Village, China, 1882
Taishan Province-southern China

Grandparents

No information is available

List of brothers and sisters and dates of birth:

1. Brother Chang Pam, 1910 (died one week later)
2. Sister Da Ger Yu Shim, 1910
3. Brother Shan Chai Ng, 1911 (died at age seventeen)
4. Brother Di Sha, 1912
5. Shi Moy, 1916

List of interviewee children and dates of birth

1. Peter Lee, 1937
2. Kate Lee Gong, 1941
3. Emmie Lee Quan, 1942
4. Donald Lee, 1943

Stepchildren

1. Mabel Lee Sing, 1914
2. Chester Lee, 1916
3. Francis Lee Chung, 1918
4. Jane Lee Au, 1920
5. Ellen Lee Chung, 1924
6. Marjorie Lee Louie, 1927
7. Mae Lee Woo, 1930
8. Hanson Lee, 1939

Present occupation: Retired

Occupations over the years: Mother, stepmother, seamtress, food preparer, farmer, landlady